

# Introduction to Conflict Resolution: Concepts and Definitions

**I**N this second edition of our book we bring the survey of the conflict resolution field up to date at the beginning of the twenty-first century. Conflict resolution as a defined specialist field has come of age in the post-Cold War era. It has also come face to face with fundamental new challenges, some of which have come into even sharper focus since the first edition of this book.

## Why a Second Edition?

As a defined field of study, conflict resolution started in the 1950s and 1960s. This was at the height of the Cold War, when the development of nuclear weapons and the conflict between the superpowers seemed to threaten human survival. A group of pioneers from different disciplines saw the value of studying conflict as a general phenomenon, with similar properties whether it occurs in international relations, domestic politics, industrial relations, communities, families or between individuals. They saw the potential of applying approaches that were evolving in industrial relations and community mediation settings to conflicts in general, including civil and international conflicts.

A handful of people in North America and Europe began to establish research groups to develop these new ideas. They were not taken very seriously. The international relations profession had its own categories for understanding international conflict, and did not welcome the interlopers. Nor was the combination of analysis and practice implicit in the new ideas easy to reconcile with traditional scholarly institutions or the traditions of practitioners such as diplomats and politicians.

Nevertheless, the new ideas attracted interest, and the field began to grow and spread. Scholarly journals in conflict resolution were created. Institutions to study the field were established, and their number rapidly increased. The field developed its own subdivisions, with different groups studying international crises, internal wars, social conflicts and approaches ranging from negotiation and mediation to experimental games.

By the 1980s, conflict resolution ideas were increasingly making a difference in real conflicts. In South Africa, for example, the Centre for Intergroup Studies was applying the approaches that had emerged in the field to the developing confrontation between apartheid and its challengers, with impressive results. In the Middle East, a peace process was getting under way in which negotiators on both sides had gained experience both of each other and of conflict resolution through problem-solving workshops. In Northern Ireland, groups inspired by the new approach had set up community relations initiatives that were not only reaching across community divides but were also becoming an accepted responsibility of local government. In war-torn regions of Africa and South-East Asia, development workers and humanitarian agencies were seeing the need to take account of conflict and conflict resolution as an integral part of their activities.

By the closing years of the Cold War, the climate for conflict resolution was changing radically. With relations between the superpowers improving, the ideological and military competition that had fuelled many regional conflicts was fading away. Protracted regional conflicts in Southern Africa, Central America, and East Asia moved towards settlements. It seemed that the UN could return to play the role its founders expected.

The dissolution of the Soviet Union brought to a close the long period in which a single international conflict dominated the international system. Instead, internal conflicts, ethnic conflicts, conflicts over secession and power struggles within countries became the norm in the 1990s. These reflected not so much struggles between competing centres of power, of the kind that had characterized international conflict for most of the 350 years since the peace of Westphalia, but the fragmentation and breakdown of state structures, economies and whole societies. At their extreme, in parts of Africa, the new wars witnessed the return of mercenary armies and underpaid militias which preyed on civilian populations in a manner reminiscent of medieval times.

In this new climate, the attention of scholars of international relations and comparative politics turned to exactly the type of conflict that had preoccupied the conflict resolution thinkers for many years. A richer cross-fertilization of ideas developed between conflict

resolution and these traditional fields. At the same time, practitioners from various backgrounds were attracted to conflict resolution. International statesmen began to use the language, international organizations set up Conflict Resolution Mechanisms and Conflict Prevention Centres. A former President of the United States, Jimmy Carter, became one of the most active leaders of a conflict resolution non-governmental organization (NGO). The Nyerere Foundation was established with comparable aims for Africa. Development and aid workers, who had earlier tended to see their function as 'non-political', now became interested in linking their expertise to conflict resolution approaches, because so many of the areas they were most concerned with were conflict zones – 'complex humanitarian emergencies' were seen also to be 'complex political emergencies'. A similar cross-fertilization took place with international peacekeepers. Overseas development ministries in several countries set up conflict units and began funding conflict prevention and resolution initiatives on a significant scale. Regional organizations such as the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the Organization of African Unity (OAU) (now the African Union (AU)), did the same.<sup>1</sup> The UN Secretary-General declared the prevention of violent conflict to be a central goal for the international community in the new millennium. How to achieve a 'peaceful settlement of disputes' between states was a familiar theme in the international relations and strategic studies literature and had always been part of the stock-in-trade of international diplomacy. Less familiar was the challenge to statist international organizations of managing non-state conflicts.

A greater degree of impact, however, also brought greater scrutiny, and the development of searching critiques from different quarters. This second edition of our book has been largely prompted by these. Conflict resolution had always been controversial, both in relation to outside disciplines, and internally amongst its different protagonists and schools. It also drew persistent fire from critics at different points along the political and intellectual spectrum from neo-realists to neo-Marxists. After the high hopes of the early 1990s, three developments in particular took the gloss off what were no doubt often unrealistic expectations of rapid results. First, there were the difficulties that international interveners encountered in chaotic war zones such as in Bosnia (1992–5) and Somalia (1992–3). A number of analysts pointed to the impact of globalization on the weakening of vulnerable states, the provision of cheap weaponry suitable for 'asymmetric war', and the generation of shadow economies that made 'new wars' self-perpetuating and profitable. Conflict resolution was seen to be incapable of addressing this nexus. Second, there was the collapse of the Israeli-Palestinian 'Oslo' peace process with the launch of the second

intifada or uprising in September 2000. The Oslo process had been hailed at the time as an example of success for classic conflict resolution approaches. Third came the shock of the destruction of the World Trade Center and the attack on the Pentagon on 11 September 2001, together with the kaleidoscope of events that followed, summed up as the 'war on terror'. What possible answer could conflict resolution have to what was seen as the lethal combination of 'rogue states', globalized crime, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, and the fanatical ideologues of international terrorism?

Behind these political challenges lay more precisely focused intellectual challenges. We will look briefly at three of these here in order to clarify what is characteristic of the conflict resolution approach and to explore the scope and limits of the field (Woodhouse, 1999b). These themes will be carried through the rest of the book.

Our first set of critics, exemplified by David Shearer's analysis of 'conflict resolution in Sierra Leone' (1997), question whether a conflict resolution consensus-promoting strategy, based on impartial mediation and negotiation by the international community, is appropriate in cases where war is fuelled by 'greed' rather than 'grievance' (Berdal and Malone, eds, 2000). 'Warlord insurgencies' or clan-based criminal mafias driven by economic motives are unlikely to be amenable to resolution by consent and negotiation. Indeed, pursuit of mediated settlements and the bringing in of humanitarian aid can have the unintended effect of prolonging the conflict and feeding the warring factions, with civilian populations suffering most. Targeted military action, on the other hand, is said to be much more likely to have the effect of foreshortening the conflict by persuading those losing ground to accept a settlement – as demonstrated in Bosnia in 1995. This is a variant of the traditional realist criticism of conflict resolution, in which international politics is seen as a struggle between antagonistic and irreconcilable groups with power and coercion as the only ultimate currency, and 'soft power' approaches of conflict resolution dismissed as ineffective and dangerous. The essence of our response to this criticism is that in the kinds of conflict prevalent since the end of the Cold War a 'quick military fix' is rarely possible. Moreover, as exemplified particularly in chapters 6 and 8, where we describe how military force has been used by international interveners in response to conflicts of this kind, its function has been to create political space for a post-war reconstruction process defined largely in terms of conflict resolution principles.

Our second set of critics, exemplified in Mark Duffield's paper 'Evaluating conflict resolution' (1997; also see 2001), argue that, far from contemporary internal wars being aberrant, irrational and non-productive phenomena, they represent 'the emergence of entirely new

types of social formation adapted for survival on the margins of the global economy' (p. 100). Instead of recognizing this, however, the most powerful economies and governments treat these wars as local symptoms of local failures, and therefore expect 'behavioural and attitudinal change' in those countries. The disciplinary norms of 'liberal governance' are imposed from outside. Conflict resolution, described by Duffield as a 'socio-psychological model', together with aid and human development programmes, is seen to have been co-opted into this enterprise – used as an instrument of pacification in unruly border territories so that existing power structures can continue to control the global system. This is a variant of the traditional Marxist criticism, which sees 'liberal' conflict resolution as naive and theoretically uncritical, since it attempts to reconcile interests that should not be reconciled, fails to take sides in unequal and unjust struggles, and lacks an analysis within a properly global perspective of the forces of exploitation and oppression. We will engage with this substantial critique throughout the rest of this book, arguing that what is criticized is a caricature of conflict resolution, not conflict resolution itself, and that from the beginning the field incorporated the imperative of structural change in asymmetric conflict situations – albeit no doubt not in a classic Marxist manner.

In general, in response to both of these criticisms, whereas realist theory and most Marxist theory sees violence as unavoidable and integral to the nature of conflict, such determinism is rejected in conflict resolution. Here there are always seen to be other options, and direct violence is regarded as an avoidable consequence of human choice.

Our third set of critics, exemplified in Paul Salem's 'Critique of western conflict resolution from a non-western perspective' (1993; see also Salem, ed., 1997), argue that the 'western' assumptions on which conflict resolution rests are not applicable universally. Salem questions some of the 'hidden assumptions in the western approach to conflict resolution' from an Arab Muslim perspective and suggests that they are not shared in other parts of the world. These are examples of a wider 'culture critique' that has been much discussed in the conflict resolution field in recent years and will be looked at again, particularly in chapter 15.

In response to these and other criticisms, this book argues that, on the contrary, the developing tradition of thinking about conflict and conflict resolution is all the more relevant as the fixed structures of sovereignty and governance break down. All over the world, societies are facing stresses from population growth, structural change in the world economy, migration into cities, environmental degradation and rapid social change. Societies with institutions, rules or norms for managing conflict and well-established traditions of governance are

generally better able to accommodate peacefully to change; those with weaker governance, fragile social bonds and little consensus on values or traditions are more likely to buckle. Strengthening the capacity of conflict resolution within societies and political institutions, especially preventatively, is a vital part of the response to the phenomena of warlordism and ethnonationalism. We argue that conflict resolution has a role to play, even in war zones, since building peace constituencies and understandings across divided communities is an essential element of humanitarian engagement. We argue that conflict resolution is an integral part of work for development, social justice and social transformation, that aims to tackle the problems of which mercenaries and child soldiers are symptoms. We argue for a broad understanding of conflict resolution, to include not only mediation between the parties but also efforts to address the wider context in which international actors, domestic constituencies and intra-party relationships sustain violent conflicts. We argue that although many of the recent theories and practices of conflict resolution may have been articulated more vociferously in the West, their deep roots reach into far older world traditions from which they draw their inspiration. Indeed, every culture and society has its own version of what is, after all, a general social and political need. The point is not to abandon conflict resolution because it is western, but to find ways to enrich western and non-western traditions through their mutual encounter. And, finally, this applies all the more urgently to the phenomenon of international terrorism. Here, conflict resolution teaches that short-term denial strategies on their own will fail unless accompanied by and embedded within middle-term persuasion strategies, long-term prevention strategies, and international coordination and legitimisation strategies. We look at this in more detail in chapter 11.

## **Conflict Resolution Models**

We begin our survey by looking at general framework models that relate the different components of conflict resolution to each other (complementarity) and to the nature and phases of the conflicts being addressed (contingency). We will then give a brief synopsis of some of the classical ideas that have shaped conflict resolution thinking and practice and are still foundations of the field. At the end we will add some more recent models that are also proving influential.

We must at the outset note the current debate within the field between ‘conflict resolvers’ and ‘conflict transformers’ – although we will then set it aside. In this book we see conflict transformation as the deepest level of the conflict resolution tradition, rather than

as a separate venture as some would prefer (Vayrynen, ed., 1991; Rupesinghe, ed., 1995; Jabri, 1996; Francis, 2002; Lederach, 2003).<sup>2</sup> In our view it does not matter in the end what label is used as the umbrella term (candidates have included 'conflict regulation' and 'conflict management' as well as conflict resolution and conflict transformation), so long as the field is coherent enough to contain the substance of what is being advocated in each case. We believe that the field retains its coherence, that it is best left intact, and that conflict resolvers and conflict transformers are essentially engaged in the same enterprise – as shown in titles of books such as Dukes's 1996 *Resolving Public Conflict: Transforming Community and Governance*. We continue to use conflict resolution as the generic term here for three reasons. First, because it was the earliest term used to define the new field (the 1957 *Journal of Conflict Resolution*). Second, because it is still the most widely used term among analysts and practitioners, as we can see by noting important titles published year by year between the time we began writing the first edition of our book (1995) to the present second edition (2005).<sup>3</sup> Third, because it is the term that is most familiar in the media and among the general public.

## Framework Models

We begin by offering a simplified model of Johan Galtung's seminal thinking on the relationship between conflict, violence and peace. As described in chapter 2, Galtung was one of the founders of the field, and the breadth of his understanding of the structural and cultural roots of violence is a corrective to those who caricature conflict resolution as purely relational, symmetrical or psychological.

### Galtung's models of conflict, violence and peace

In the late 1960s Johan Galtung (1969; see also 1996: 72) proposed an influential model of conflict that encompasses both symmetric and asymmetric conflicts. He suggested that conflict could be viewed as a triangle, with contradiction (C), attitude (A) and behaviour (B) at its vertices (see figure 1.1). Here the contradiction refers to the underlying conflict situation, which includes the actual or perceived 'incompatibility of goals' between the conflict parties generated by what Mitchell calls a 'mis-match between social values and social structure' (1981: 18). In a symmetric conflict, the contradiction is defined by the parties, their interests and the clash of interests between them. In an asymmetric conflict, it is defined by the parties, their relationship and the conflict of interests inherent in the relationship. Attitude includes

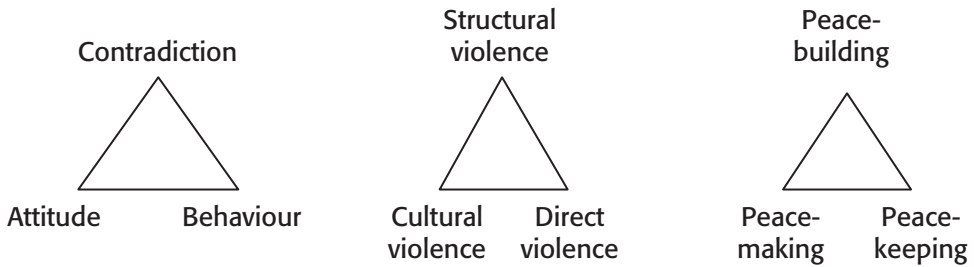


Figure 1.1 Galtung's models of conflict, violence and peace

the parties' perceptions and misperceptions of each other and of themselves. These can be positive or negative, but in violent conflicts parties tend to develop demeaning stereotypes of the other, and attitudes are often influenced by emotions such as as fear, anger, bitterness and hatred. Attitude includes emotive (feeling), cognitive (belief) and conative (will) elements. Analysts who emphasize these subjective aspects are said to have an expressive view of the sources of conflict. Behaviour is the third component. It can include cooperation or coercion, gestures signifying conciliation or hostility. Violent conflict behaviour is characterized by threats, coercion and destructive attacks. Analysts who emphasize objective aspects such as structural relationships, competing material interests or behaviours are said to have an 'instrumental' view of the sources of conflict.<sup>4</sup>

Galtung argues that all three components have to be present together in a full conflict. A conflict structure without conflictual attitudes or behaviour is a latent (or structural) one. Galtung sees conflict as a dynamic process in which structure, attitudes and behaviour are constantly changing and influencing one another. As the dynamic develops, it becomes a manifest conflict formation as parties' interests clash or the relationship they are in becomes oppressive. Conflict parties then organize around this structure, to pursue their interests. They develop hostile attitudes and conflictual behaviour. And so the conflict formation starts to grow and intensify. As it does so, it may widen, drawing in other parties, deepen and spread, generating secondary conflicts within the main parties or among outsiders who get sucked in. This often considerably complicates the task of addressing the original, core conflict. Eventually, however, resolving the conflict must involve a set of dynamic changes that involve de-escalation of conflict behaviour, a change in attitudes and transforming the relationships or clashing interests that are at the core of the conflict structure.

A related idea due to Galtung (1990) is the distinction between direct violence (children are murdered), structural violence (children die through poverty) and cultural violence (whatever blinds us to this or

seeks to justify it). We end direct violence by changing conflict behaviour, structural violence by removing structural contradictions and injustices, and cultural violence by changing attitudes. These responses relate in turn to broader strategies of peacekeeping, peacebuilding and peacemaking. Galtung defined ‘negative peace’ as the cessation of direct violence and ‘positive peace’ as the overcoming of structural and cultural violence as well.

### Conflict escalation and de-escalation

The process of conflict escalation is complex and unpredictable. New issues and conflict parties can emerge, internal power struggles can alter tactics and goals, and secondary conflicts and spirals can further complicate the situation. The same is true of de-escalation, with unexpected breakthroughs and setbacks changing the dynamics, with advances in one area or at one level being offset by relapses at others, and with the actions of third parties influencing the outcome in unforeseen ways. Here we offer the simplest model in which escalation phases move along a normal distribution curve from the initial *differences* that are part of all social developments, through the emergence of an original *contradiction* that may or may not remain latent, on up through the process of *polarization* in which antagonistic parties form and the conflict becomes manifest, and culminating in the outbreak of *direct violence* and *war* (see figure 1.2). As we will see in chapter 3, escalation models such as this are popular with those who try to find objective criteria for measuring statistical changes in conflict levels in different countries from year to year. They are also used by those who attempt to match appropriate conflict resolution strategies to them (Glasl, 1982; Fisher and Keashly, 1991).

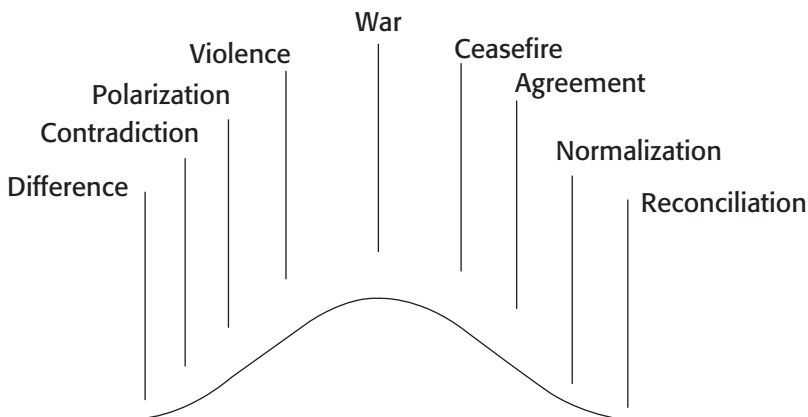
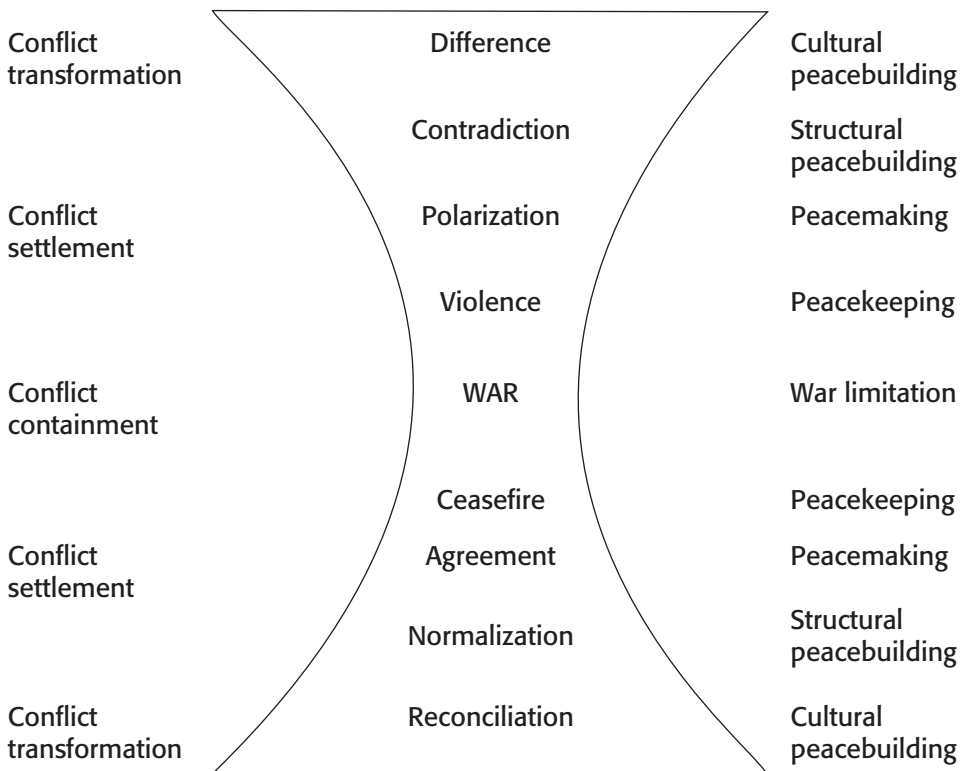


Figure 1.2 Conflict escalation and de-escalation

### The hourglass model: a spectrum of conflict resolution responses

Here we combine Galtung's ideas on conflict and violence with escalation/de-escalation phases to produce the 'hourglass' model of conflict resolution responses (Ramsbotham and Woodhouse, 1999). The hourglass represents the narrowing of political space that characterizes conflict escalation, and the widening of political space that characterizes conflict de-escalation. As the space narrows and widens, so different conflict resolution responses become more or less appropriate or possible. This is a contingency and complementarity model, in which 'contingency' refers to the nature and phase of the conflict, and 'complementarity' to the combination of appropriate responses that need to be worked together to maximize chances of success in conflict resolution (see figure 1.3).<sup>5</sup> Conflict transformation is seen to encompass the deepest levels of cultural and structural peacebuilding. Conflict settlement (which many critics wrongly identify with conflict resolution) corresponds to what we call 'elite peacemaking' – in other words, negotiation



*Note:* in de-escalation phases conflict resolution tasks must be initiated at the same time and are nested. They cannot be undertaken sequentially as may be possible in escalation phases – see chapters 5 and 8. We suggest that what is sometimes called deep peacemaking (which includes reconciliation) is best seen as part of cultural peacebuilding.

**Figure 1.3** The hourglass model: conflict containment, conflict settlement and conflict transformation

or mediation among the main protagonists with a view to reaching a mutually acceptable agreement. Conflict containment includes preventive peacekeeping, war limitation and post-ceasefire peacekeeping. War limitation is made up of attempts to constrain the fighting geographically, to mitigate and alleviate its intensity, and to bring about its termination at the earliest possible moment. In this model we distinguish between the elite peacemaking that forms the substance of conflict settlement, and the deeper levels of peacemaking (including reconciliation) that are better seen as part of cultural peacebuilding.

In chapter 5 (Preventing Violent Conflict) we will look at the top half of the hourglass model. In chapter 6 (Peacekeeping) we will look at the conflict containment components. In chapter 7 (Ending Violent Conflict) we will look at the conflict settlement components. And in chapters 8–10 (on post-war peacebuilding) we will look at the bottom half of the hourglass model.

Table 1.1 indicates the range of complementary processes and techniques relevant to the hourglass model of escalation and de-escalation offered in this book, and elaborated in the section below.

## Classical Ideas

Conflict is an intrinsic and inevitable aspect of social change. It is an expression of the heterogeneity of interests, values and beliefs that arise as new formations generated by social change come up against inherited constraints. But the way we deal with conflict is a matter of habit and choice. It is possible to change habitual responses and exercise intelligent choices.

### Conflict approaches

One typical habit in conflict is to give very high priority to defending one's own interests. If Cain's interests clash with Abel's, Cain is inclined to ignore Abel's interests or actively to damage them. Leaders of nations are expected to defend the national interest and to defeat the interests of others if they come into conflict. But this is not the only possible response.

Figure 1.4 illustrates five approaches to conflict, distinguished by whether concern for Self and concern for Other is high or low. Cain has high concern for Self and low concern for Other: this is a 'contending' style. Another alternative is to yield: this implies more concern for the interests of Other than Self. Another is to avoid conflict and withdraw: this suggests low concern for both Self and Other. Another is to balance concern for the interests of Self and Other, leading to a

<b>Table 1.1 Conflict resolution techniques, complementarity and the hourglass model</b>		
<b>Stage of conflict</b>	<b>Strategic response</b>	<b>Examples of tactical response (skills and processes)</b>
Difference	Cultural peacebuilding	Problem-solving Support for indigenous dispute resolution institutions and CR training Fact finding missions and peace commissions
Contradiction	Structural peacebuilding	Development assistance Civil society development Governance training and institution building Human rights training Track II mediation and problem-solving
Polarization	Elite peacemaking	Special envoys and official mediation Negotiation Coercive diplomacy Preventive peacekeeping
Violence	Peacekeeping	Interposition Crisis management and containment
War	War limitation	Peace enforcement Peace support and stabilization
Ceasefire	Peacekeeping	Preventive peacekeeping Disarmament and security sector reform Confidence building and security enhancing measures Security in the community through police training
Agreement	Elite peacemaking	Electoral and constitutional reform Power sharing and de-centralization of power Problem-solving
Normalization	Structural peacebuilding	Collective security and cooperation arrangements Economic resource cooperation and development Alternative defence
Reconciliation	Cultural peacebuilding	Commissions of enquiry/truth and justice commissions Peace media development Peace and conflict awareness education and training Cultural exchanges and initiatives, sport as reconciliation Problem-solving as future imaging

search for accommodation and compromise. And there is a fifth alternative, seen by many in the conflict resolution field as the one to be recommended where possible: high regard for the interests of both Self and Other. This implies strong assertion of one's own interest, but equal awareness of the aspirations and needs of the other, generating energy to search for a creative problem-solving outcome.

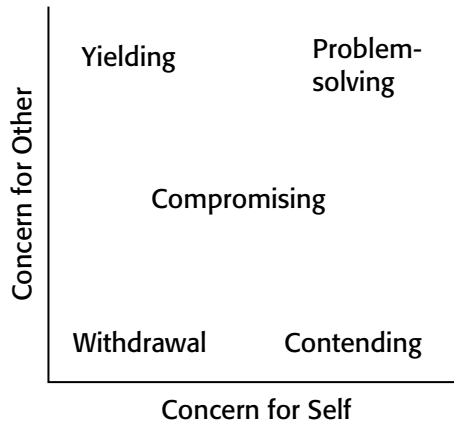


Figure 1.4 Five approaches to conflict

### Win-lose, lose-lose, win-win outcomes

What happens when the conflict approaches of two parties are considered together? Parties to conflicts are usually inclined to see their interests as diametrically opposed. The possible outcomes are seen to be win-lose (one wins, the other loses) or compromise (they split their difference). But there is a much more common outcome in violent conflicts: both lose. If neither is able to impose an outcome or is prepared to compromise, the conflictants may impose such massive costs on each other that all of the parties end up worse off than they would have been had another strategy been adopted. In conflict resolution analysis this is found to be a much more common outcome than is generally supposed. When this becomes clear to the parties (often regrettably late in the day), there is a strong motive based on self-interest for moving towards other outcomes, such as compromise or win-win. The spectrum of such outcomes may well be wider than conflictants suppose.

Traditionally, the task of conflict resolution has been seen as helping parties who perceive their situation as zero-sum<sup>6</sup> (Self's gain is Other's loss) to re-perceive it as a non-zero-sum conflict (in which both may gain or both may lose), and then to assist parties to move in the positive sum direction. Figure 1.5 shows various possible outcomes of the conflict between Cain and Abel. Any point towards the right is better for Abel, any point towards the top is better for Cain. In the Bible, the prize is the Lord's favour. Cain sees the situation as a zero-sum conflict: at point 1 (his best outcome) he gets the Lord's favour, at 2 (his worst) the Lord favours Abel. All the other possibilities lie on the line from 1 to 2 in which the Lord divides his favour, more or less equally, between the two brothers. Point 3 represents a possible compromise position. But it is the other diagonal, representing the

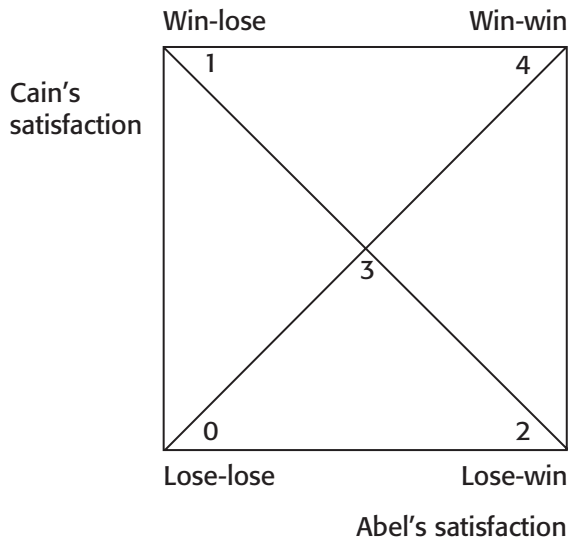


Figure 1.5 Zero-sum and non-zero-sum outcomes

non-zero-sum outcomes, that is the more interesting from a conflict resolution perspective: the mutual loss that actually occurred, at 0, when Abel was slain and Cain lost the Lord's favour, and the mutual gain that they missed, at 4, if each had been his brother's keeper.

### Prisoner's Dilemma and the evolution of cooperation

Prisoner's Dilemma is a simple representation in game theory, that clearly illustrates the tendency for contending strategies to end in lose-lose outcomes. Two players (prisoners accused of crime) each have two choices: to cooperate with each other (remain silent) or to defect (inform on the other). The choices must be made in ignorance of what the other will do (they are kept in separate cells). The possible pay-offs are given in table 1.2. It can be seen that, whatever choice the other may make, each player considered singly gains a higher pay-off by choosing to defect (if the other cooperates, defection earns 5 points rather than 3; if the other defects, defection earns 1 point rather than 0). So the only rational course is to defect. But this is not the best

	Cooperate	Defect
Cooperate	3, 3	0, 5
Defect	5, 0	1, 1

outcome for either, since, whereas mutual defection earns 1 point each, mutual cooperation would have earned both of them 3 points. So the individually rational choice turns out to deliver a mutual lose–lose outcome. The collectively rational choice is for both to cooperate, reaching the elusive win–win outcome (point 4 in figure 1.5). But if both could communicate and agree to go for mutual cooperation, how can each guarantee that the other will not subsequently defect, tempted by the 5 point prize? In this kind of social trap, self-interested parties can readily get stuck at lose–lose outcomes.

The trap depends on the game being played only once. If each move is part of a sequence of repeated games, there are possibilities for cooperative behaviour to evolve. In a well-known series of experiments, Robert Axelrod (1984) invited experts to submit programs for a Prisoner's Dilemma competition run on computer. A spectrum of 'nice' and 'nasty' strategies was submitted and each was tested in pairs against all the others in repeated interactions. The surprise clear overall winner was a simple strategy called 'Tit-for-Tat' (submitted by the conflict resolution analyst Anatol Rapaport), which began by cooperating on the first move, and thereafter copied what the other had done on the previous move. The repeated overall success of Tit-for-Tat shows, in Richard Dawkins's phrase, that, contrary to a widely held view about competitive environments of this kind (including Darwinian natural selection), 'nice guys finish first' (Dawkins, 1989: 202–33). Tit-for-Tat is not a push-over. It hits back when the other defects. But, crucially, it initially cooperates (it is 'generous'), and it bears no grudges (it is 'forgiving'). Its responses are also predictable and reliable (it has 'clarity of behaviour'). For the 'evolution of cooperation' to get going in a mêlée of competing strategies, there must be a critical if at first quite small number of initially cooperating strategies, and the 'shadow of the future' must be a long one: interaction must not be confined to just one game (for example, with one player able to wipe out another in one go). But, so long as these conditions operate, even though 'nasty guys' may seem to do well at first, 'nice guys' come out on top in the end.<sup>7</sup> Natural selection favours cooperation.

So taking account of the future relationship (for example, between two communities who will have to live together) is one way out of the trap. Another is to take the social context into account. Imagine, for example, that the prisoners know that there is a gang outside who will punish them if they defect and reward them if they cooperate. This can change their pay-offs and hence the outcome. A similar change occurs if instead of considering only their own interests, the parties also attach value to the interests of each other: social players are not trapped.

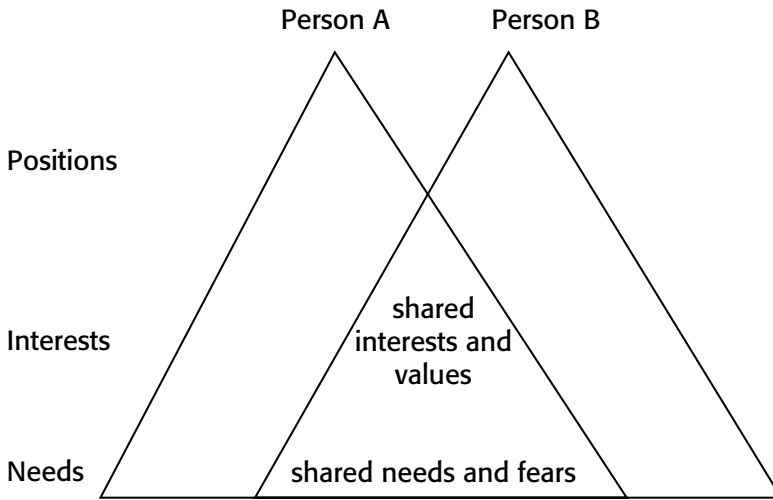
### **Positions, interests and needs**

How can the parties reframe their positions if they are diametrically opposed, as they often are? One of the classical ideas in conflict resolution is to distinguish between the positions held by the parties and their underlying interests and needs. For example, Egypt and Israel quarrel over Sinai. Each claims sovereignty and their positions seem incompatible. But in negotiations it turns out that Egypt's main interest is in national territorial integrity and Israel's main interest is in security. So the political space is found for what came to be the Camp David settlement. Interests are often easier to reconcile than positions, since there are usually several positions that might satisfy them. Matters may be more difficult if the conflict is over values (which are often non-negotiable) or relationships, which may need to be changed to resolve the conflict, although the same principle of looking for a deeper level of compatible underlying motives applies. Some analysts take this to the limit by identifying basic human needs (for example, identity, security, survival) as lying at the roots of other motives. Intractable conflicts are seen to result from the denial of such needs, and conflict can only be resolved when such needs are satisfied. But the hopeful argument of these analysts is that, whereas interests may be subject to relative scarcity, basic needs are not (for example, security for one party is reinforced by security for the other). As long as the conflict is translated into the language of needs, an outcome that satisfies both sides' needs can be found (see figure 1.6).

### **Third-party intervention**

Where two parties are reacting to each others' actions, it is easy for a spiral of hostility and escalation to develop through positive feedback. The entry of a third party may change the conflict structure and allow a different pattern of communication, enabling the third party to filter or reflect back the messages, attitudes and behaviour of the conflictants. This intervention may dampen the feedback spiral.

Although all third parties make some difference, 'pure' mediators have traditionally been seen as 'powerless' – their communications are powerful, but they bring to bear no new material resources of their own. In other situations there may also be powerful third parties whose entry alters not only the communication structure but also the power balance. Such third parties may alter the parties' behaviour as well as their communications by judicious use of the carrot and the stick (positive and negative inducement); and they may support one outcome rather than another. Of course, by taking action, powerful third parties may find themselves sucked into the conflict as a full party. Figure 1.7



Source: from Floyer Acland, 1995: 50

Figure 1.6 Positions, interests and needs

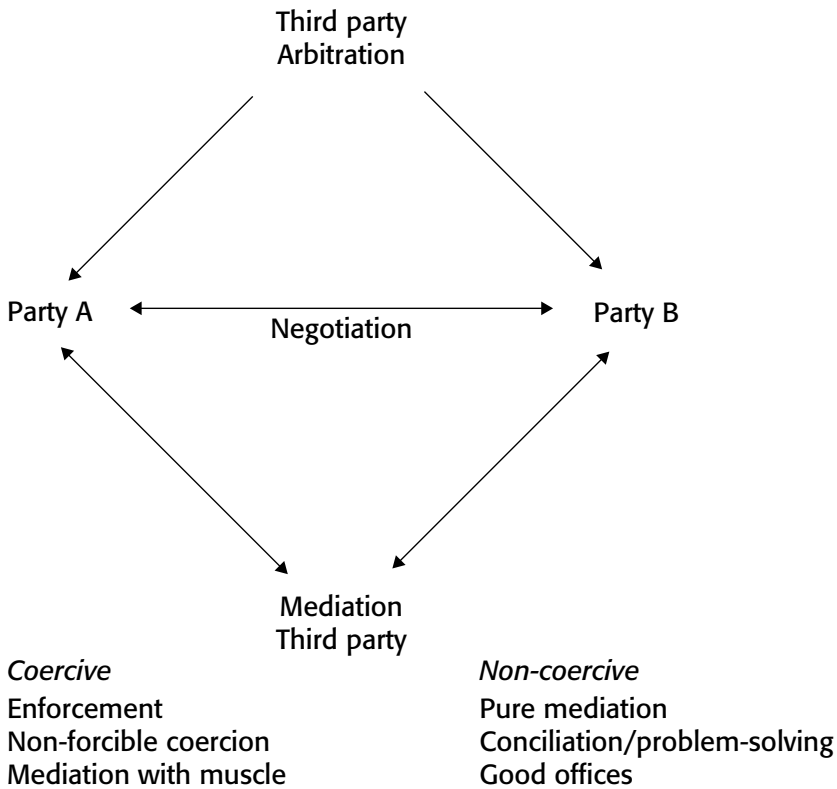


Figure 1.7 Coercive and non-coercive third part intervention

illustrates how third parties may act as arbiters (with or without the consent of the conflict parties), or may try to facilitate negotiations or mediate between the parties (coercively or non-coercively).

### Three faces of power

It may seem strange to call pure mediators powerless, when they may provide the impetus to resolve the conflict. This is because the term 'power' is ambiguous. On the one hand it means the power to command, order, enforce – coercive or 'hard' power. On the other, it means the power to induce cooperation, to legitimize, to inspire – persuasive or 'soft' power. Hard power has always been important in violent conflict, but soft power may be more important in conflicts managed peacefully. Kenneth Boulding (1989) calls the former 'threat power' ('do what I want or I will do what you don't want'). Following earlier theorists of management-labour negotiations, he then further distinguishes between two forms of soft power: 'exchange power', associated with bargaining and the compromising approach ('do what I want and I will do what you want'), and 'integrative power', associated with persuasion and transformative long-term problem-solving ('together we can do something that is better for both of us'). This roughly coincides with Joseph Nye's distinction between military, economic and legitimacy power, of which the United States has a huge preponderance of the first, a large share of the second, but only a limited and highly ambiguous measure of the third (Nye, 2002). Nye concludes that soft power is much more important, even from a self-interested perspective, than many unreconstructed realists may suppose. Conflict resolvers try to shift emphasis away from the use of threat power and towards the use of exchange and integrative power (see table 1.3).

**Table 1.3 Three faces of power**

<b>Threat power</b>	<b>Exchange power</b>	<b>Integrative power</b>
Destructive	Productive	Creative
productive	destructive	productive
creative	creative	destructive

*Source:* from Boulding, 1989: 25

Third parties like politicians and governments may use all these forms of power. In terms of third-party intervention (see figure 1.7) it is helpful to distinguish between powerful mediators, or 'mediators with muscle', who bring their power resources to bear, and powerless mediators, whose role is confined to communication and facilitation. Track I diplomacy involves official governmental or intergovernmental

representatives, who may use good offices, mediation, and sticks and carrots to seek or force an outcome, typically along the win-lose or 'bargaining' line (between the points 1, 3 and 2 in figure 1.5). Track II diplomacy, in contrast, involves unofficial mediators who do not have carrots or sticks. They work with the parties or their constituencies to facilitate agreements, encouraging the parties to see their predicament as lying along the lose-lose to win-win line (between points 0, 3 and 4 in figure 1.5) and to find mutually satisfactory outcomes.

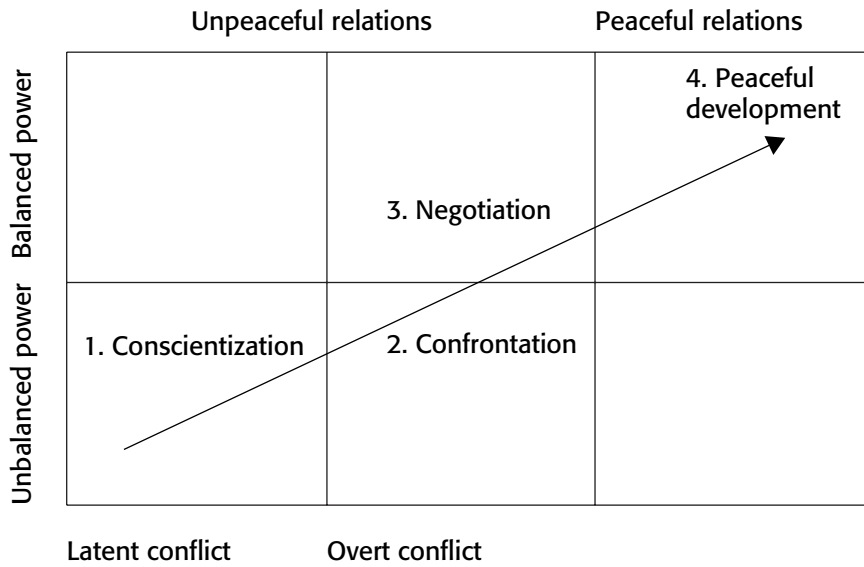
### Symmetric and asymmetric conflicts

So far we have been considering conflicts of interest between relatively similar parties. These are examples of *symmetric* conflicts. Conflict may also arise between dissimilar parties such as between a majority and a minority, an established government and a group of rebels, a master and his servant, an employer and her employees. These are *asymmetric* conflicts. Here the root of the conflict lies not in particular issues or interests that may divide the parties, but in the very structure of who they are and the relationship between them. It may be that this structure of roles and relationships cannot be changed without conflict.

Classical conflict resolution, in some views, applies only to symmetric conflicts. In asymmetric conflicts the structure is such that the top dog always wins, the underdog always loses. The only way to resolve the conflict is to change the structure, but this can never be in the interests of the top dog. So there are no win-win outcomes, and the third party has to join forces with the underdog to bring about a resolution.

From another point of view, however, even asymmetric conflicts impose costs on both parties. It is oppressive to be an oppressor, even if not so oppressive as to be oppressed. There are costs for the top dogs in sustaining themselves in power and keeping the underdogs down. In severe asymmetric conflicts the cost of the relationship becomes unbearable for both sides. This then opens the possibility for conflict resolution through a shift from the existing structure of relationships to another.

The role of the third party is to assist with this transformation, if necessary confronting the top dog. This means transforming what were unpeaceful, unbalanced relationships into peaceful and dynamic ones. Figure 1.8 illustrates how the passage from unpeaceful to peaceful relationships may involve a temporary increase in overt conflict as people become aware of imbalances of power and injustice affecting them (stage 1, education or 'conscientization'), organize themselves and articulate their grievances (stage 2, confrontation), come to terms in a more equal way with those who held a preponderance of power over them (stage 3, negotiation) and finally join in restructuring a more equitable and just relationship (stage 4, resolution). There are



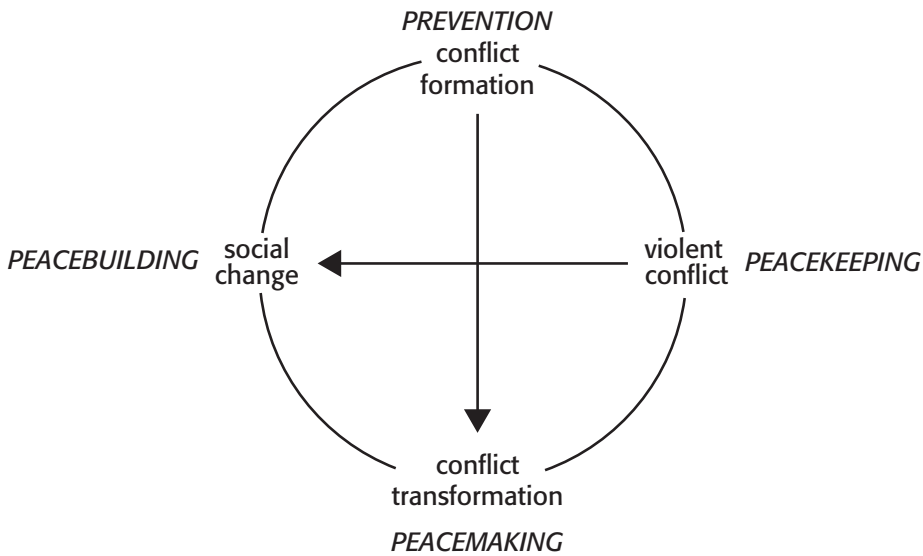
Source: from Curle, 1971 and Lederach, 1995

**Figure 1.8** Transforming asymmetric conflicts (I)

many ways in which this can be approached without using coercion. There is the Gandhian tactic of ‘speaking truth to power’, influencing and persuading the power-holders. Then there are the tactics of mobilizing popular movements, increasing solidarity, making demonstrations of resolve, establishing a demand for change. Raising awareness of the conflict among those who are external or internal supporters of the top dog may start to weaken the regime (as did, for example, the opponents of apartheid in South Africa). The unequal power structure is unbalanced; it is held up by props of various kinds; removing the props may make the unbalanced structure collapse. Another tactic is to strengthen and empower the underdogs. The underdogs may withdraw from the unbalanced relationship and start building anew: the parallel institutions approach. Non-violence uses soft power to move towards a more balanced relationship.

### New Developments in Conflict Resolution

The new patterns of major armed conflict that became prominent in the 1990s suggested a more nuanced model of conflict emergence and transformation. This model sees conflict formations arising out of social change, leading to a process of violent or non-violent conflict transformation, and resulting in further social change in which hitherto suppressed or marginalized individuals or groups come to articulate their interests and challenge existing norms and power



**Figure 1.9** Conflict dynamics and conflict resolution

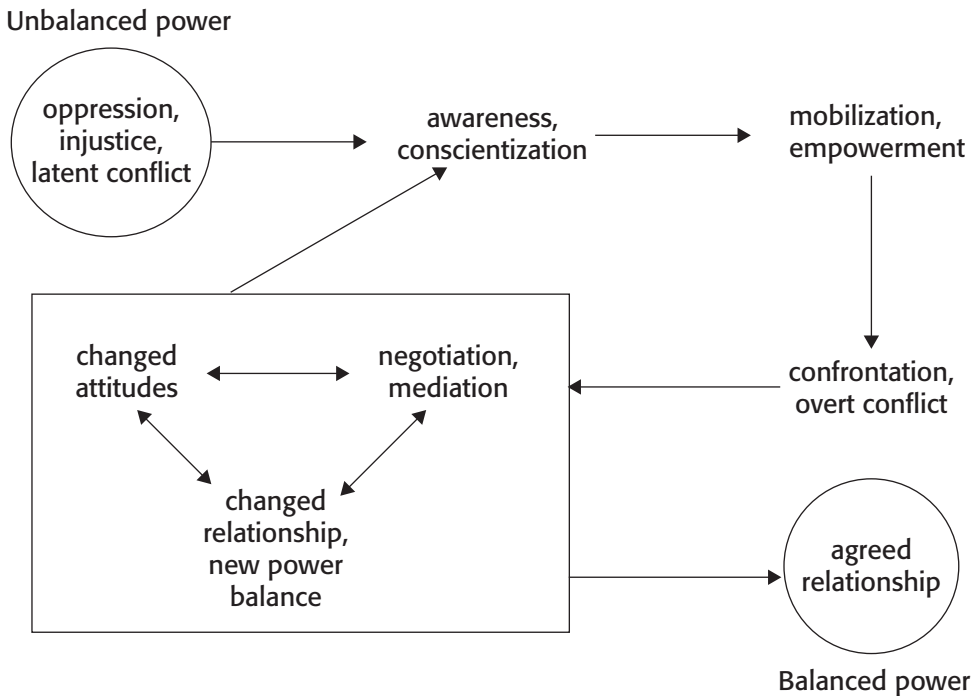
structures. Figure 1.9 shows a schematic illustration of phases of conflict, and forms of intervention that may be feasible at different stages. A schematic life cycle of conflict sees a progression from peaceful social change to conflict formation to violent conflict and then to conflict transformation and back to peaceful social change. But this is not the only path. The sequence can go from conflict formation to conflict transformation and back to social change, avoiding violence. Or it can go from conflict formation to violent conflict back to the creation of fresh conflicts.

In response, there has been a differentiation and broadening in the scope of third-party intervention. Whereas classical conflict resolution was mainly concerned with entry into the conflict itself and with how to enable parties to violent conflict to resolve the issues between them in non-violent ways, the contemporary approach is to take a wider view of the timing and nature of intervention. In the 1990s came Fisher and Keashly's (1991) complementarity and contingency model, mentioned earlier, with its attempt to relate appropriate and coordinated resolution strategies to conflict phases. Lederach's (1997) model of conflict resolution and conflict transformation levels has also been influential, with its emphasis on 'bottom-up' processes and the suggestion that the middle level can serve to link the other two (see figure 1.10). Francis has developed Curle's original asymmetric conflict model, embedding classic conflict resolution strategies within wider strategies for transforming conflicts of this kind (see figure 1.11). Encarnacion et al. (1990) have elaborated models of third-party intervention in order to



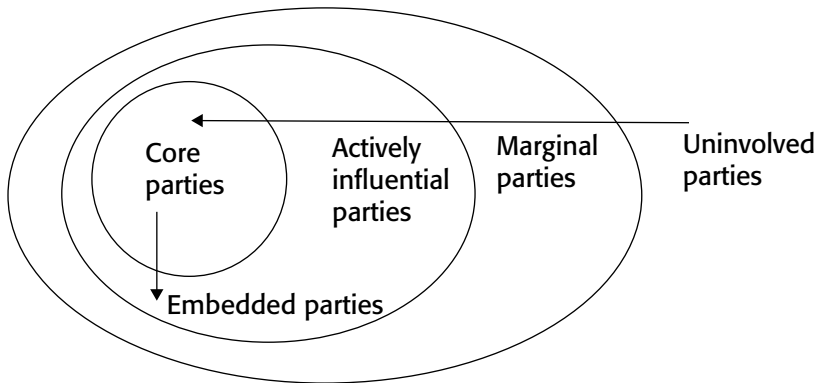
Source: from Lederach, 1997

Figure 1.10 Actors and approaches to peacebuilding



Source: from Francis, 1994

Figure 1.11 Transforming asymmetric conflicts (II)



Source: from Encarnacion et al., 1990: 45

**Figure 1.12** The gradient of conflict involvement

stress the way external parties may come to be core parties as their level of involvement increases, and to emphasize the importance of ‘embedded parties’ from inside the conflict who often play key roles in expediting moves to resolution (see figure 1.12). In general there has been a shift from seeing third-party intervention as the primary responsibility of external agencies towards appreciating the role of internal ‘third parties’ or indigenous peacemakers. Instead of outsiders offering the fora for addressing conflicts in one-shot mediation efforts, the emphasis is on the need to build constituencies and capacity within societies and to learn from domestic cultures how to manage conflicts in a sustained way over time. This suggests a multitrack model in place of the earlier Track I and Track II models mentioned above, in which emphasis is placed on the importance of indigenous resources and local actors, what we might call Track III (see figure 1.13). There is a shift towards seeing conflict in its context (associated sometimes with structuralist, constructivist or discourse-based views of social reality).

Summing up all of this new work, it is helpful to locate contemporary armed conflicts within a framework that encompasses different levels from international level (global, regional, bilateral), through national state level, down to societal level (see figure 1.14).

Most major armed conflicts today are hybrid struggles that spill across the international, state and societal levels. This is what makes them so hard to resolve or transform. The 58-year conflict in Kashmir, for example, is variously interpreted as a conflict between India and Pakistan (international) or as an ethnic/religious identity struggle (social). As such it is simultaneously affected by changes at *international level*, ranging from the global level (e.g. the transition from a bipolar to a unipolar world) and regional level down to bilateral state–state relations, and by changes at *social level*, ranging from top-level elites

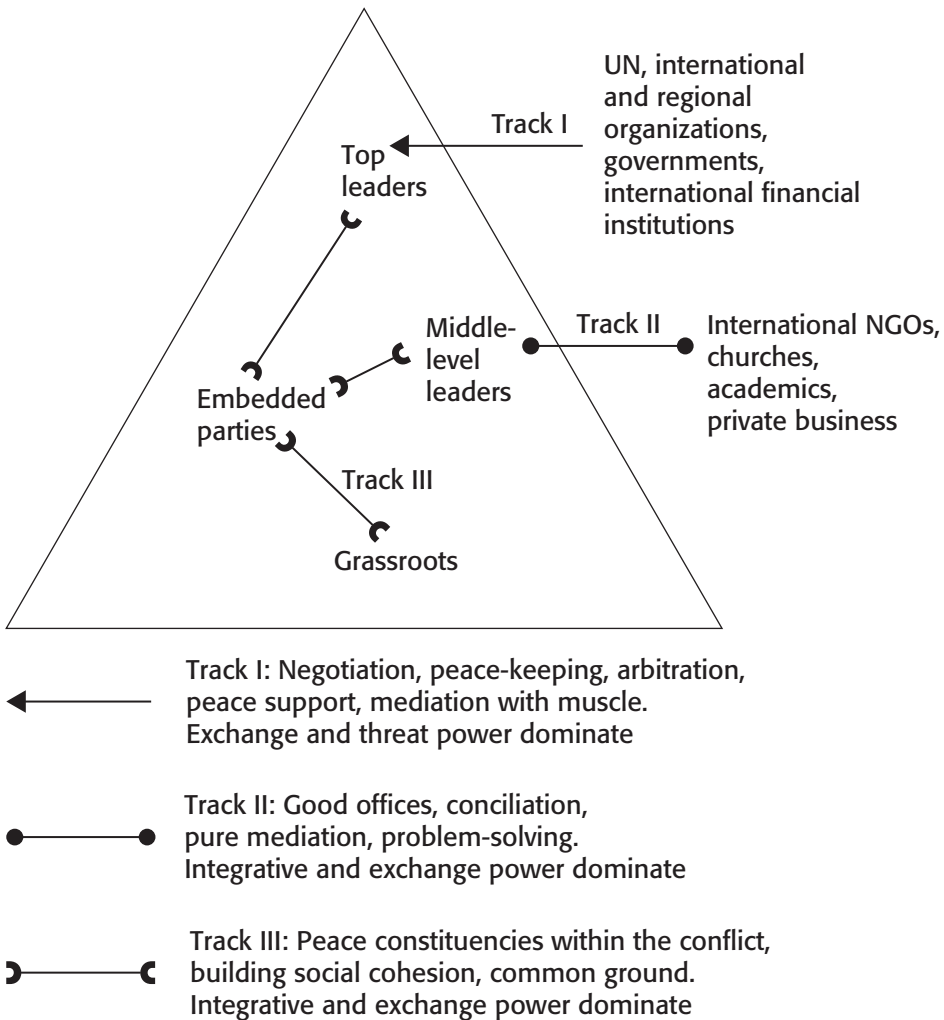


Figure 1.13 Multitrack conflict resolution

through middle-level leadership and down to local and grassroots interests. Figure 1.15 shows the significance of the ambivalent role played by the state at *state level* in all this, at the same time the main actor on the international scene and also (in theory) the main satisfier of internal social needs. Conflict transformation, therefore, needs to operate simultaneously at all these levels, including vertical relations up and down across the levels from the grassroots up to the international, and horizontal relations across and between all the social actors involved. In dynamic terms, depending on the stage the conflict has reached, as illustrated in the hourglass model (figure 1.3), the overall aim is to work to prevent the narrowing of political space associated

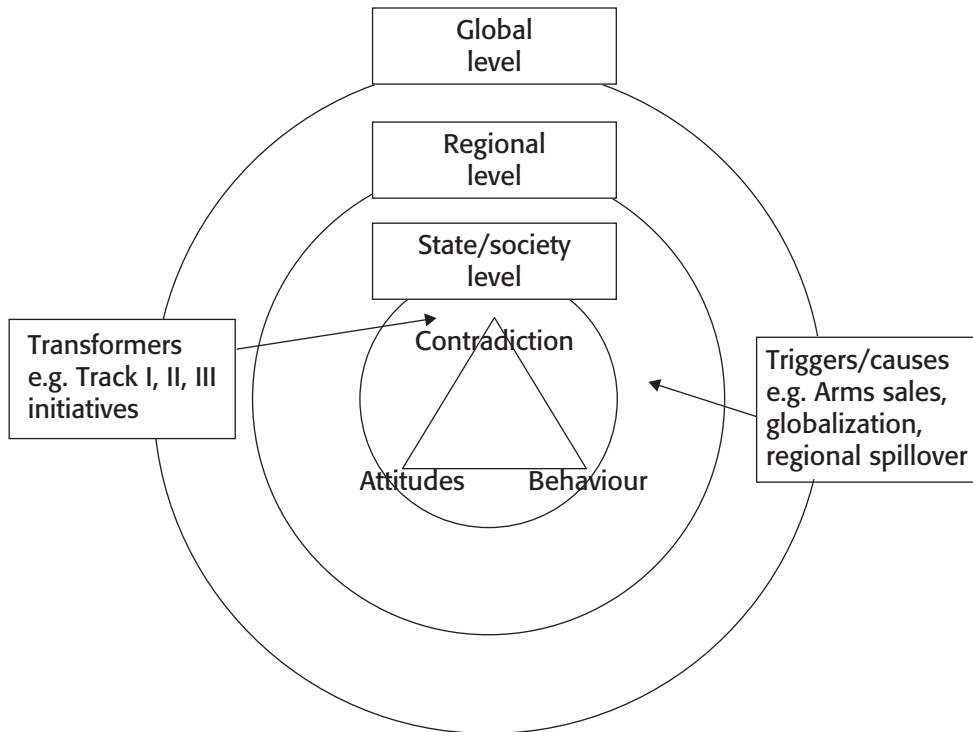


Figure 1.14 Conflict and context

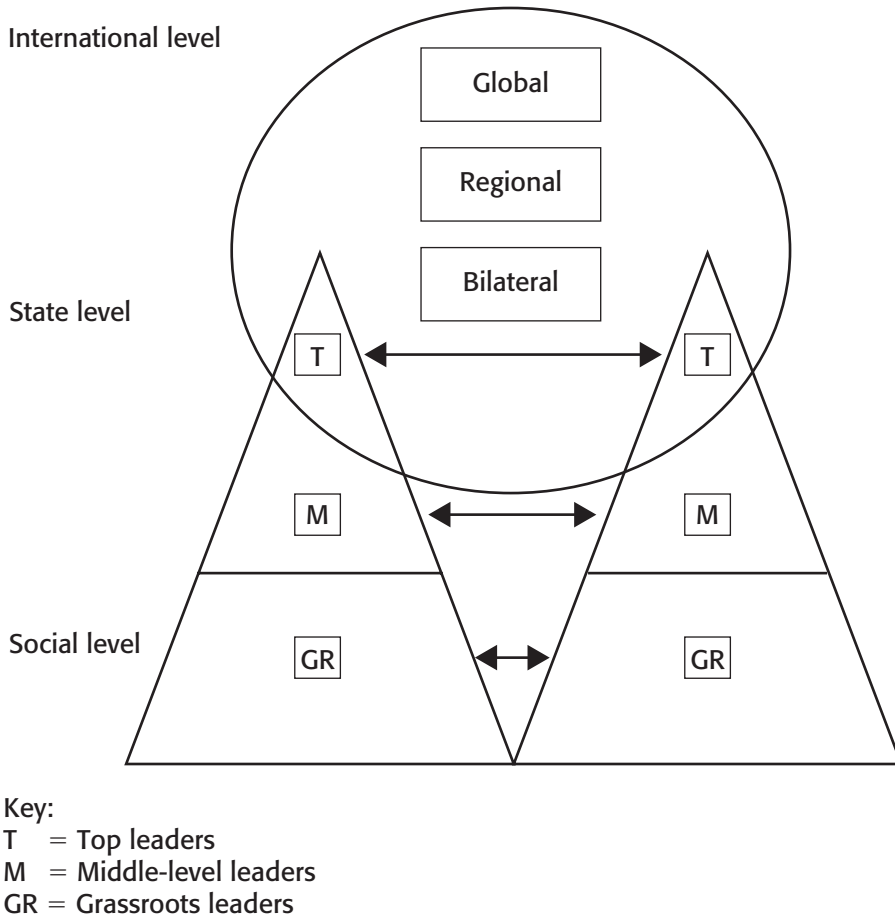
with conflict escalation and to encourage the widening of political space associated with conflict de-escalation and transformation.

Finally, criticisms of gender blindness, cultural insensitivity and lack of critical awareness have prompted responses from the conflict resolution field that we describe below.

## Terminology

Although terminology is often confusing, with the same terms used in different ways both within the academic literature and in general usage, we offer the following definitions of how key terms are used in this book.

By *conflict* we mean the pursuit of incompatible goals by different groups. This suggests a broader span of time and a wider class of struggle than armed conflict. We intend our usage here to apply to any political conflict, whether it is pursued by peaceful means or by the use of force. (Some theorists, notably John Burton, have distinguished



Source: Developed with Nick Lewer during a workshop at the National Defense College of Pakistan, Islamabad, February 2005

**Figure 1.15** Modelling international–social conflict: a framework for transformation

between disputes about negotiable interests that can be settled by compromise, and more deep-seated conflicts that involve human needs and can only be resolved by removing underlying causes.)

*Armed conflict* is a narrower category denoting conflicts where parties on both sides resort to the use of force. It is notoriously difficult to define, since it can encompass a continuum of situations ranging from a military overflight or an attack on a civilian by a single soldier to an all-out war with massive casualties. The research community has identified a number of thresholds and rules for deciding what to count. We consider these definitions in chapter 3.

*Violent conflict*, or *deadly conflict*, is similar to armed conflict, but also includes one-sided violence such as genocides against unarmed civilians. We mean direct, physical violence. We acknowledge the

strong argument in peace research for broadening the concept of violence to include exploitative social relations that cause unnecessary suffering, but prefer to use the now well-known term 'structural violence' for this.

*Contemporary conflict* refers to the prevailing pattern of political and violent conflicts at the beginning of the twenty-first century; *contemporary armed conflicts* refer only those that involve the use of force.

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*Conflict settlement* means the reaching of an agreement between the parties to settle a political conflict, so forestalling or ending an armed conflict. This suggests finality, but in practice conflicts that have reached settlements are often reopened later. Conflict attitudes and underlying structural contradictions may not have been addressed.

*Conflict containment* includes peacekeeping and war limitation (geographical constraint, mitigation and alleviation of intensity, and termination at the earliest opportunity).

*Conflict management*, like the associated term 'conflict regulation', has been used as a generic term to cover the whole gamut of positive conflict handling. Here we understand it to refer in a more limited way to the settlement and containment of violent conflict.

*Conflict resolution* is a more comprehensive term which implies that the deep-rooted sources of conflict are addressed and transformed. This implies that behaviour is no longer violent, attitudes are no longer hostile, and the structure of the conflict has been changed. It is difficult to avoid ambiguity since the term is used to refer both to the process (or the intention) to bring about these changes, and to the completion of the process. A further ambiguity is that conflict resolution refers to a particular defined specialist field (as in 'conflict resolution journals'), as well as to an activity carried on by people who may or may not use the term or even be aware of it (as in 'conflict resolution in Central America'). Nevertheless, these two senses of the term are tending to merge.

*Conflict transformation* is a term which for some analysts is a significant step beyond conflict resolution, but which in our view represents its deepest level. As clarified in figure 1.3, it implies a deep transformation in the institutions and discourses that reproduce violence, as well as in the conflict parties themselves and their relationships. It corresponds to the underlying tasks of structural and cultural peacebuilding.

*Negotiation* is the process whereby the parties within the conflict seek to settle or resolve their conflicts. *Mediation* involves the intervention of a third party; it is a voluntary process in which the parties retain control over the outcome (pure mediation), although it is sometimes combined with positive and negative inducements (mediation with

muscle). *Conciliation* or *facilitation* is close in meaning to pure mediation, and refers to intermediary efforts to encourage the parties to move towards negotiations, as does the more minimalist role of providing good offices. *Problem-solving* is a more ambitious undertaking in which conflict parties are invited to reconceptualize the conflict with a view to finding creative, win-win outcomes. *Reconciliation* is a longer-term process of overcoming hostility and mistrust between divided peoples.

We use *peacemaking* in the sense of moving towards settlement of armed conflict, where conflict parties are induced to reach agreement voluntarily, for example as envisaged in Chapter VI of the UN Charter on the 'Pacific Settlement of Disputes' (Article 33). *Peacekeeping* (traditionally with the consent of the conflict parties) refers to the interposition of international armed forces to separate the armed forces of belligerents, often now associated with civil tasks such as monitoring and policing and supporting humanitarian intervention. *Peace-enforcement* is the imposition of a settlement by a powerful third party. *Peacebuilding* underpins the work of peacemaking and peacekeeping by addressing structural issues and the long-term relationships between conflictants. With reference to the conflict triangle (see figure 1.1), it can be suggested that peacemaking aims to change the attitudes of the main protagonists, peacekeeping lowers the level of destructive behaviour, and peacebuilding tries to overcome the contradictions which lie at the root of the conflict (Galtung, 1996: 112).

Finally, it is worth noting that the aim of conflict resolution is not the elimination of conflict, which would be both impossible and, as is made clear in Curle's model of the transformation of asymmetric conflicts (see figure 1.8), sometimes undesirable. Rather, the aim of conflict resolution is to transform actually or potentially violent conflict into peaceful (non-violent) processes of social and political change. This is an unending task as new forms and sources of conflict arise.

## Structure of the Book

The structure of the book is based on the idea that, having described the evolution of the conflict resolution field (chapter 2), examined the statistical bases for analysis (chapter 3) and characterized the nature of contemporary conflict (chapter 4), broad distinctions can then be made between the tasks of preventing violent conflict (chapter 5), mitigating or alleviating violent conflict once it has broken out while at the same time searching for ways of terminating it (chapter 6), ending violent conflict (chapter 7), and ensuring that conflict does not

subsequently regress to violence but is lastingly transformed into peaceful processes of political and social change (chapter 8), including peacebuilding (chapter 9) and reconciliation (chapter 10). We are not suggesting that conflicts necessarily go through these phases, but think that this is the simplest expository structure to adopt. In addition to a thorough updating of these chapters, this second edition of the book offers a series of additional new chapters in Part II that explore aspects of the field not fully covered in the first edition. This includes terror and global order (chapter 11), gender issues (chapter 12), the ethics of intervention (chapter 13), dialogue, discourse and disagreement (chapter 14), the culture question (chapter 15) and a concluding survey of the state of the field and thoughts on the main tasks for the next generation of conflict resolvers (chapter 16).

**Recommended reading**

Burton and Dukes, eds (1990); Cheldelin et al., eds (2003); Deutsch and Coleman, eds (2000); Fisher (1997); Jeong, ed. (1999); Kriesberg (1998); Mitchell and Banks (1996); Sandole (1999); Sandole and van der Merwe (1993); Wallensteen (2002b).